

Application No.: 10/656,736  
Docket No.: SS3335 US DIV 1

Page 2

**Amendments to Claims**

Claims 1-26 (Cancelled).

27. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for heat-treating a sheet material comprising:

a first heating zone comprising an air-impingement floatation dryer;  
a second heating zone comprising a vacuum belt oven; and  
a tension isolation means disposed between the first and second heating zones, wherein the tension isolation means applies tension to the sheet as it is conveyed through the first heating zone and causes a reduction in tension on the sheet as the sheet exits the tension isolation means and is conveyed through the second heating zone.

28. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 27 wherein the tension isolation means comprises serpentine rolls.

29. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 27 wherein the tension isolation means comprises a nip formed by two rolls.

Claims 30-35 (Canceled).

Best Available Copy